Le Bulletin/Newsletter

VOL. 6 · NO. 2 · SPRING/SUMMER · CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY · 1986 · PRINTEMPS/ÉTÉ · UNIVERSITÉ CONCORDIA

INSTITUT

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

INSTITUTE

HUITIÈME ANNIVERSAIRE 8 EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY



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The Newsletter welcomes submissions of announcements, articles and other relevant material of interest. Manuscripts must by typed and double-spaced. Drawings, designs or cartoons must be in black and white. Enclose self-addressed stamped envelope with any material that is to be returned. The collective reserves the right to edit material, however, it will respect the author's style and take care to retain the author's exact meaning.

Readers are welcomed to write letters for publication. Please include your full name, address and if possible, your telephone number. We will withhold your name upon request.

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Annual subscription fees (two issues per year)

$10.00 Institution
$ 6.00 Individuals
$ 4.00 Students

Please make your cheque payable to

The Simone de Beauvoir Institute

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Views expressed in this Newsletter are that of the individual authors and not necessarily shared by the Institute.

GUEST EDITORIAL

By Elizabeth Morey

> "Universities and colleges have a responsibility to demonstrate to society, through their own actions, that equity is possible and that opportunities should not be denied to people because of their gender. Until women are allowed to participate fully in the academic community, the community will be less than it could otherwise become. Nor will it be possible for Canadians to have reasonably balanced knowledge and understanding of themselves or of the national and international societies within which they reside." (Some Questions of Balance T.H.B. Symons & J.E. Page).

In the summer of 1985, in Nairobi, Kenya, the end of the UN Decade of Women was celebrated in a spirit of faith and hope that women could take the control necessary to make a more just and peaceful world. A major theme of the conference, and indeed of the entire decade, was the power of education as a primary tool for changing women's lives. In its "Forward-looking Strategies", the UN has recognized this importance by proposing 10 recommendations on educaion including "(m)easures... to ensure that women have an equal opportunity to acquire education at alllevels, as well to apply their education in a work and career context." These recommendations address sexism in the curriculum, increased access to scientific, technical and vocational education, adult education, funding for female scholars, adequate counselling services and women's studies programmes.

Although countries of the said "developed" world, like Canada can feel satisfied that enrollment rates for male and female students are finally beginning to approach equal levels, as UNESCO has pointed out, it is the quality of education, not the quantity which holds

women back. This quality is measured both in and outside the classroom and is marked by the general negative atitude toward women as scholars and by the ingrained, traditional view of the role of women in general. Such attitudes make women in the educational system (and throughout society) victims of discrimination in the forms of inadequate and inappropriate services, sexual harrassment, sexual assault, lack of access to promotion or equal pay, etc.

In Canada, some things have improved over the past 20 years. According to Statistics Canada, enrollment of women undergraduates has increased from 24.3% to 45.6% with 50.3% of the degrees at this level awarded towomen. At the graduate level, there has been an over 90% increase in female enrollment since 1972. Unfortunately, women students still tend to be ghettoized in "traditional" faculties and are deprived of positive role models since the number of female faculty members has not increased proportionately. Over the same time period, there has been aless than 5% increase in full-time female faculty membership (11% to 15.5%). Women are usually clustered in non-tenure track positions and statistics show that their median salaries in every academic field and in almost every age group arelower than men's. The 1984 Symons-Page report on Canadian education for the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada attributes this underrepresentation to "the conscious and unconscious discrimination arising from habit attitude". Symons-Page, having dedicated an entire chapter to women in academia proceed to make 20 recommendations, many echoing those of the UN and of Status of Women reports from educational institutions across the country including Concordia's Weaving the Fabric for the Future.

> Concordia has been priviledged for many years to have the Simone de Beauvoir Institute as a centre promoting a better understanding of women.

Unfortunately, we were also many years behind most major universities in North America in confronting the problems of women in our community. The Committee on the Status of Women has a mandate to deal withall issues affecting women students, faculty and staff. We are not foolish enough to believe that changes will occur overnight and without endless consultation, sensitization and just plain fighting. Our areas of priority include day care, sexual harrassment, equity in employument, personal safety and security, curriculum, sexism in the classroom, professional development, part-time employment and athletics. The list appears rather extensive but we hope that with the support and direct involvement of members of the Concordia community, we will be able to make strides in each of these areas of concern. Mostly, we hope to become the catalyst for programmes and policies at every level of university life, to act as a sounding board and as a resource.

We solicit the assistance of the entire Concordia community and are available to all. Please get involved and let us know how we can be of assistance to you.●

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Elizabeth Morey is the Advisor to the Rector on the Status of Women, Concordia University. She can be reached at 848-4841

CROESO,[1] ARPI HAMALIAN

By Mair Verthuy

Some of us speak one or two languages, some of us speak thirteen. The new Principal of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute, Arpi Hamalian, belongs in the latter category (although she may not recognize the Welsh of the title!) We can clearly look forward not only to renewed activity on our own doorstep, but also to renewed and revitalized contacts with women across the world.

Arpi might well be considered typically Canadian since, like so many of us, she was born elsewhere and first came here as an immigrant. Born, raised and partly educated in the Middle East (at the American University of Beirut with which the Institute has long had close contacts), she also studied at the University of Wisconsin before coming to the Education Department at Concordia University in the very year of the foundation of the new merged institution, 1974.

Arpi's personal and academic background has made her particularly sensitive to and knowledgeable about the educational problems and needs of refugee and immigrant women in various parts of the world: here, in the Middle East, in various African and Caribbean countries, and so on, as a glance at the list of her papers and consultancies for such agencies as C.I.D.A. (Canadian International Development Agency) immediately reveals.

She has also been active in internal University affairs: chairperson of her department, president of the Faculty Association, and a member -- we sat on it together -- of the committee that originally

[1]Welcome! (Arpi says she understood it immediately!)

recommended to the Rector the establishment of an Advisory Committee on the Status of Women. Since the Institute's inception, although her many other commitments prevented her for a long time from becoming closely involved in our affairs, she has taken an interest in our well-being, attended events, supported us in the University community.

Now she is Principal. Not yet 1000 days, only 30! Installed in her new office on the second floor of the building, Arpi looks and sounds happy and intends to spend as much time at the Institute on both campuses as can possibly be managed. "Vice-Dean Gail Valaskakis and Libbi Gardham kept the place going during the interim period; I'm grateful to them for making my job easier to start with. Everyone is extremely co-operative and kind. One Fellow told me today that she doesn't expect to agree with me all the time, but that she doesn't expect either that disagreements would prevent us from working together. If we can keep that spirit, we're well away."

What are her plans? "To build on the Institute's strengths, to capitalize on the talents of all members, to leave our mark on the university and the community." And we start in March, which is to be declared Simone de Beauvoir month, in recognition of the great French feminist who allowed us to use her name, and to celebrate the eighth birthday of the Institute, whose existence was ratified by the Board of Governors on March 9, 1978, the day after International Women's Day.

A new sense of excitement is pervading not only the Principal, but also the students, Fellows and staff. Arpi's moving, and the Institute is moving with her!●

NOUS VOUS SOUHAITONS LA BIENVENUE,
MADAME LA DIRECTRICE

par: Maïr Verthuy

Les féministes se doivent de créer et de maintenir des liens entre les femmes du monde entier. De cette tâche nous, à l'Institut, avions déjà fait une priorité (voir notre Colloque international sur la recherche et l'enseignement relatifs aux femmes, le Répertoire que nous avons publié, etc.), mais la présence parmi nous de la nouvelle Directrice, Arpi Hamalian, qui parle treize langues et en lit d'autres, nous permettra de renouveler et revitaliser nos activités à l'échelle internationale.

Elle-même immigrée multi-langue donc et multi-culturelle, ayant fait ses études au Moyen-Orient et aux Etats-Unis, Arpi est tout naturellement sensible aux problèmes auxquels sont confrontées les personnes transnationales: les immigré/e/s, les réfugié/e/s, les migrant/e/s, en particulier justement les femmes, chez qui tout problème est centuplé. Elle en a fait son domaine de spécialisation dans sa discipline d'origine, les sciences de l'éducation, et il suffit d'un regard rapide sur son curriculum vitae pour saisir l'étendue de son travail dans ce domaine, que celui-ci porte sur le Canada, l'Afrique, les Caraïbes, le Moyen-Orient, etc., travail reconnu d'ailleurs par l'ACDI (Agence canadienne pour le développemnt international) qui a souvent recours à ses services en tant qu'experte-conseil.

Arpi, et c'est sans doute bon signe, est arrivée à l'Université Concordia en 1974, l'année même de sa fondation, c'est-à-dire de la fusion entre les deux institutions constituantes. Depuis, elle participe activement à la vie universitaire: directrice du départe-

ment des sciences de l'éducation, présidente de l'Association des professeurs, membre du comité qui a recommandé au Recteur en 1981 la mise sur pied de la première commission consultative sur le statut de la femme à l'Université Concordia, j'en passe et des meilleurs.

Arpi a toujours suivi de très près les activités de l'Institut, agissant un peu comme notre ambassadrice officieuse auprès de la communauté universitaire. L'on comprend qu'avec ses multiples obligations elle ait longtemps hésité à accepter un poste de Conseillère chez nous puisqu'elle a l'habitude de s'engager à fond dans tout ce qu'elle entreprend ou de ne pas s'y engager du tout! Nous sommes content/e/s qu'elle soit enfin officiellement des nôtres et pas la moindre.

Installée aujourd'hui dans son bureau au deuxième étage au 2170 de la rue Bishop, Arpi envisage son avenir et celui de l'Institut avec le sourire. Le travail ne lui fait pas peur. "J'ai eu de la chance. La vice-doyenne Gail Valaskakis et Elizabeth Gardham ont pris l'Institut en main pendant la période intérimaire, ce qui a beaucoup facilité ma tâche actuelle, je leur suis très reconnaissante. Puis tout le monde est très serviable. Une des conseillères m'a expliqué ce matin que point n'était besoin d'être toujours d'accord pour travailler ensemble. Avec de telles attitudes, nous sommes sur la bonne voie."

Ses projets pour l'Institut? "Bâtir sur ce qui existe déjà. Exploiter au maximum les talents de toutes - et tous - nos membres. Rappeler aux gens que nous sommes là." L'Institut fera donc du mois de mars le "Mois Simone de Beauvoir" pour fêter non seulement cette grande féministe française qui a bien voulu nous autoriser à nous servir de son nom mais aussi les huit ans de l'Institut même, créé par le Conseil des gouverneurs le 9 mars 1978, le lendemain de la Journée

internationale de la femme.

Des idées et de l'énergie, Arpi bouge; l'Institut bouge aussi. A suivre...●

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AVEZ-VOUS LU ?

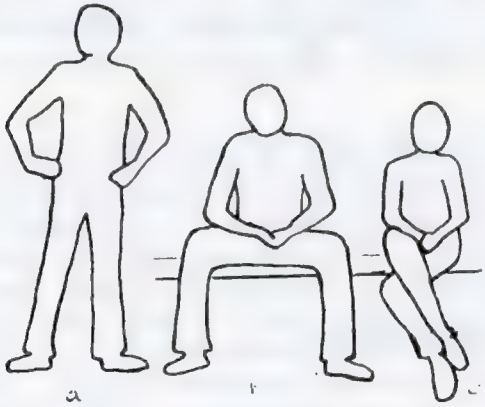
"Je ne vous dirai pas que j'entre en guérissance tant que je n'aurai pas vomi Cendrillon et Monroe réunies, Perrette et le Pot au lait. Le Chaperon Rouge traversant le bois. La Belle au Bois Dormant, attendant le prince charmant. Blanche-Neige faisant le ménage. Et Garbo, et Dietrich. Toutes ces femmes pour qui vous nous avez élevées, repoussoirs résignés, futures mères exemplaires, crevant à essayer de l'être..."

Les Prunes de Cythère par Jeanne Hyvrard

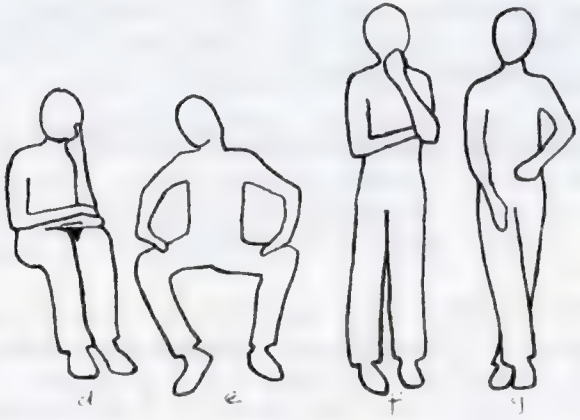
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PEOPLE, POSTURE AND POWER

By Linda Dyer



Who are these people? What are they like? Do they exude an air of competence, control and confidence? Are they uncertain or submissive? Which of them are comfortable, which dependent, which strong?



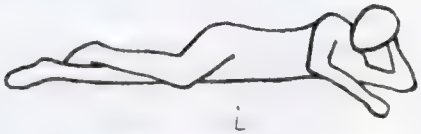
Our body posture may convey a clear impression of our character, emotional state or ease in our surroundings. But this is not all. Marianne Wex is a German photographer who became interested in gender

differences in body postures. During the early 1970s, she took about 3000 photographs, and collected 2500 others from magazines and catalogues -- pictures of how men and women sit, stand, lie and walk. Many of her photos were shot at train stations, where she could observe others without being noticed.

Wex found that there were differences in the prototypical female and male body stance. In general, the women's postures were: legs held close together, feet either pointing straight forward or turned slightly inward, arms held close to the body. "In short, the woman makes herself small and narrow, and takes up little space." Men, on the other hand, held their legs far apart, feet turned outwards, and arms held at a distance from the body. Men generally took up considerably more space than women.

Based on these observations, Wex inferred that the pattern was a reflection of the male/female power hierarchy. In our patriarchal society, a woman is trained to present herself as small, harmless and submissive. A comfortable sprawl is not socially acceptable. The man's dominance is emphasized by his broad, relaxed, "masculine" posture. He is confident. He is in control. The world is his.





The few exceptions to these typical postures were found in young boys and very old or obviously underprivileged men and women. In our society, children, aged people and economically deprived people tend to be relatively powerless. Perhaps, then, "inappropriate" postures are tolerated, for it is clear

that these people are not a threat to the patriarchy.

Conformity to the female pattern is also reduced when women are together and there are no men around; apparently women rarely signal status differences in body posture when they are among themselves. Interestingly, other exceptions to the typical female stance were found in the media, in pictures of women portrayed in sexually proffering positions. Wex noted too that women in university settings were less likely to stand and sit in "powerless" positions. In general, though, she found that younger women, between 15 and 25 years of age, were most conforming in their body stance.

Wex's research was conducted over 10 years ago in Germany. We wondered whether her findings would be generalizable to Canada today. One afternoon in the fall, we made casual observations of 110 women and men standing and sitting around Concordia University and in downtown Montreal. The women and men varied in age and socioeconomic status, though we did not try to record relative proportions of people in each category. We found that 66% of the women and 68% of the men conformed to Wex's description of typical male and female postures. Apparently, there is reason to believe that the differences in time and culture do not matter. If we had taken into account the predicted exceptions (age, socioeconomic status and sex of companions), the pattern may have been even stronger.

Styles of clothing and social mores have changed somewhat over the past 10 years, yet these changes have not been accompanied by great deviations from the patterns observed by Marianne Wex. We plan to do more systematic research on patterns of non-conformity today. Further, we are interested in how non-conformists are perceived. Is a woman using a broad stance perceived positively (confident and competent) or negatively (inappropriately casual)? What attributions are made about males using a narrow

stance? Finally, what are the consequences of these perceptions of dominance or powerlessness?

These issues are important, we believe, because they may have an impact on our social lives and our lives at work. We are all aware of the "dress-for-success" lessons; we have learned that we can influence others' impressions of us by the clothes we wear. Perhaps this can be extended so that we, as women, can know how we may stand, sit, walk and gesture for success. Perhaps we can learn to "take back our space."●

Note 1: Source -- Wex, M. Let's take back our space, Frauenliteraturverlag Hermine Fees, 1979.

Note 2: Drawings are outlines of actual photographs of women and men. Figures c, d, f, g, and i are women. Figures a, b, e and h are men.

GOOD NEWS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

VIRAGO PRESS of England has accepted for publication a reprint of "Militarism and Feminism" that Jo Vellacott and Margaret Parkin have found and are editing. The book will also include some other short pieces dating around 1915.

TO DR. SHEILA McDONOUGH

By Katherine Waters

Sheila McDonough has recently concluded her term as Associate Principal of the Institute. It is a position to which both principals have appointed her without interruption since the Institute began operation in 1978; thus Sheila has been its longest-serving administrator. Her continuous reappointment is testimony to the support and strength both principals have drawn from her.

There probably would not have been an Institute had it not been for Sheila. When the concept of small colleges within Arts and Science was approved by Senate in 1977, it was Sheila who saw the opportunity for a Women's Studies College and contacted those of us who might, along with her, devote our time to consolidating a detailed proposal.

In the first year, Sheila took responsibility for membership, setting up contacts, meetings and files -- an horrendous task when membership was in the hundreds and its nature somewhat vaguely defined. But she showed then, as she always has, the persistence, hard work and willingness to perform essential, unglamorous tasks that few others will undertake. This was demonstrated again in 1984 when she devoted a lot of her summer to drawing up our proposal for a Chair of Women's Studies. Yes, we are all disappointed at the outcome; yet it is Sheila who particularly sacrificed her time to this enterprise, a fact which she characteristically has never mentioned.

In the Institute's first year, at a forum on Forms of Feminism, I remember Sheila's stating her own position: that in a university, feminism and scholarship were intimately connected. She spoke of

the empowerment of her own life through scholarship and publication, and the place of scholarship in feminist action. In her case, this translated into her teaching of Women's Studies courses at all levels and into her commitment to the brown bag lunch as a medium for the exchange of feminist ideas and practices. I suppose Sheila has set up and attended more brown bag lunches than anyone in the Institute.

A central value for which Sheila has stood -- at least to me who has been neither a principal nor a student, but a colleague -- is courage. The courage to speak out for what you believe is true, even if the message is unpopular; and the courage never to give up. It is a quality which is surely, in the first instance, deeply personal, but which has translated into a selfless commitment to the continuing of the Institute as a place of feminist study and debate.●



WOMEN'S WORLDS: VISIONS AND REVISIONS

Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women

Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland
6 - 10 July, 1987

For more information: Congress Secretariat
44 Northumberland Rd.,
Dublin 4
Ireland
or contact Mair Verthuy, c/o Concordia University
848-7516

MARCH EVENTS**MARCH EVENTS****MARCH ***

March 3 — Prof. Elina Haavio-Mannila
Dept. of Sociology
University of Helsinki
TOPIC: STATUS OF WOMEN AND WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAMMES IN FINLAND

March 7 — Prof. Mieke Bal
Dept. of Comparative Literature,
University of Utrecht
and
Dept. of Hebrew Bible
Harvard University
TOPIC: THE VIRGIN VANISHES:
THE NARRATIVE CONDENSATION IN JUDGES XI AND XIX

March 12 — Prof. Lise Gauvin
Université de Montréal
TOPIC: ELLE LIRA QUELQUES-UNS DE SES TEXTES ET ECHANGERA DES IDEES AVEC NOUS

March 12 — WOMEN'S STUDIES STUDENTS' ASSOC.
TOPIC: KEEPING THE GYNERGY GOING:
AN EXPLORATION OF WOMEN STUDENT'S RESEARCH AND CREATIVITY RELATED TO WOMEN

March 17 — Prof. Zulma-Nelly Martinez
Hispanic Studies
McGill University
TOPIC: THE CONTEMPORARY NOVEL AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE FEMININE

****MARCH EVENTS***MARCH EVENTS***MARCH*****

March 19 Slide Show plus Speakers
TOPIC: FROM NAIROBI WITH LOVE...
AND FORWARD

March 20 Prof. Pieter De Vries
Department of Sociology & Anthropology
Concordia University
and
Prof. Georgina MacNab-De Vries
Department of Education
Concordia University
TOPIC: WOMEN AND WORK: A CAPE BRETON
PERSPECTIVE

March 25 Dr. Marianne Gosztonyi-Ainley
History Department
McGill University

TOPIC: THE OVERLOOKED DIMENSION:
CANADIAN WOMEN IN SCIENCE

March 26 Dr. P. Zelkowitz
Center for Research in Human
Development, Concordia University

TOPIC: SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN
OF WORKING MOTHERS

More events to be advertised at a later date

The Woman's Submerged Name

June 22, 1893

If a woman upon marrying is to lose her own name entirely, and be henceforth known only as Mrs. (equivalent, not etymologically but in usage, to "wife of") So and So, what valid objection can be urged against the consummation of the absurdity in her taking his professional title as well? It is more expedient, and just as easily defended. For "Mrs. James Smith" means just the wife of James Smith, while "Mrs. Dr. Smith" means Dr. Smith's wife; and if James is a physician, and known as Dr. Smith, the latter is more praise than the former. So with "Mrs. (Rev.) Jones," which we often see, too. It has everything to recommend it that "Mrs. Edward Jones" has, and no more is said against it, for if the lady is not "rev." neither is she Edward. Why should any one take complaisance in one and shiver at the other?

The fact is, the custom of the wife's taking the husband's name is a mere survival from the time, not so long past, when she lost all rights to, and capacity for, holding property; and, in a great measure, lost also personal liberty in marrying. She was, in the legal phrase, "merged," so it was no wonder her name was submerged. Her rights to property are now, however, on the way to being fully recognized, and her right to her name will follow, for more things are wrought by property than this world is at first sight apt to dream of.

The whole argument for a woman being known by her husband's name, to the extinction of her own, is based on the idea of her inferiority. Eliminate that, and the arguments reversed are just as strong for the husband taking the wife's name. True, many women, who have no longer a realizing sense of their own inferiority, cling to it, but that is only an illustration of the fact that "old phrases are slow to go."

Why should a woman's preference for her own name argue any disrespect, any want of affection, for her husband? Husbands can love and respect their wives while retaining their own names; so can wives their husbands. A woman's respect for her husband has no tendency to decrease because she also respects herself and her rights to individual recognition; because, in a broad word, she asserts her equality. True, her growth in intelligence does impose upon him the condition of deserving respect if he is to have it; it shifts the burdens of "seeing that she reverences him" from her shoulders to his.

Katherine Ballantine Coutts

Thamesville

Reprint from "Shocked and Appalled - A Century of Letters to The Globe and Mail" Edited by Jack Kapica

MONTREAL RESEARCH PROJECT: A HISTORY OF TEACHERS IN QUEBEC AND ONTARIO

By Alison Prentice

The research that I am doing in Montreal is part of a larger project to study the history of teachers in Quebec and Ontario. The period that the research covers is 1820 to 1920, when elementary schooling became tbe responsibility of the state. It was during the same period that, in North America as a whole, public school teaching gradually became the preserve of women.

In the earlier studies that Marta Danylewycz and I did together, we discovered that the progression to a predominantly female teaching force wes by no means a simple or straightforward process. Especially in the province of Quebec and above all in the city of Montreal, a number of factors complicated the story. We wrote up our findings in a number of articles and planned a book together; the result was an SSHRC grant and the present research in Montreal. Marta, having died under tragic circumstances last spring, is no longer able to play a role in the project. But I am welcomed in many places by archivists who knew her and admired her work, and I am also ably assisted by Ruby Heap, whose knowledge of the intricacies of the Quebec and Montreal school systems is beyond compare!

We are overwhelmed by the possibilities, for women teachers have to be looked for everywhere -- in Protestant as well as Catholic school-board archives, in schools and convents. On the other hand, one never knows what exciting discoveries might await one on any given day. The day before yesterday, we uncovered the battle of the Protestant women teachers of Montreal to elect one of their own number to the leadership of their provincial association in the early 1900s. Earlier, we began the intricate process of working out

the ever shifting relationship between the women who ran Montreal convent schools and the political authorities who subsidized their work. In both cases, financial considerations were central when conflict arose: subsidies for women's work and girls' schools never seemed adequate to the need, and even the law governing teachers' pensions discriminated against women.

Very soon, my research will take me to Quebec City, where the National Archives house a treasure trove in the papers of the provincial department of public instruction. It was to the provincial department that information abour rural and small town teachers flowed. Indeed, it flowed in such quantity that researchers in school history are sometimes daunted by the work in front of them. But the rewards are there, often in the form of colourful stories that one is less likely to find coming from the pens of more cautious urban teachers and bureaucrats.

Whatever the source, the history of teachers is fascinating and, I think, has much to tell us about the entry of women into the public labour force in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ultimately, I hope that this research on Quebec and Ontario teachers will have something to tell us about our contemporary condition as women and as workers.●

* * * * *

Dr. Alison Prentice is currently an adjunct fellow of the Institute.

MILESTONES: SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR INSTITUTE

1970 Introduction of the first inter-disciplinary course on the Nature of Women. Beginning of the Women's Studies Program.

1977 The Report of the Academic Deans to the Concordia Senate recommends the establishment of "some number of University Colleges, each built on a single, unifying theme, philosophy of education or function" to provide to interested students an educational experience that would go beyond the academic to include their personal, spiritual and affective development.

December 20 Date of Report by members of the Women's Studies Program justifying the need for a College based on the theme of Women's Studies.

1978 February Submission of Report to the University Senate recommending the establishment of an Institute for Women's Studies.

Precedent in North America: Women's Studies as an intellectual base for the Institute. "There are many women's colleges in the United States and Canada which have a general range of course offerings. In addition there are many women's studies

programs within a variety of colleges and universities. There has not yet been a college created around an intellectual base of women's studies. This makes our venture particularly challenging, and it will no doubt be considered a pilot project by many North American and European Colleges and Universities". (Excerpts from Report to University Senate.)

1978 **March 9** Recommendation by Senate to the Board of Governors.
The Board of Governors of Concordia University officially established the Institute.

June Board of Governors approved the name: The Simone de Beauvoir Institute/Institut Simone de Beauvoir.

The Provost, Dr. R.E. Wall, made the following appointments:

Prof. Mair Verthuy -- Principal
Prof. Sheila McDonough -- Assoc. Principal, SGW Campus
Prof. Katherine Waters -- Assoc. Principal, Loyola Campus

Centre - House at 2170 Bishop Street for the Sir George Williams Campus
Small Centre at 7079 Terrebonne Avenue for the Loyola Campus

MILESTONES: SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR INSTITUTE

1979	March 13 Recommendation to transfer the responsibility of administering the Women's Studies Programmes from the Centre from the Interdisciplinary Studies to the Institute.
1980	June 2 The Simone de Beauvoir Institute hosts its first national Women's Studies Bilingual Conference: PARLONS-EN/TALKING TOGETHER
1981-82	Rose Tekel, the only instructor formally attached to the Institute takes another appointment and leaves the University. Dr. Jo Vellacott is appointed on a full-time basis to the Institute as an instructor.
1982	July 26 - August 4 Hosting of the trilingual (English, French, Spanish) International Conference on Teaching and Research Related to Women. 350 participants from 80 countries attend.
1983	June Transfer of Principalship from Prof. Mair Verthuy to Prof. Elizabeth Sacca. Establishment of the Mair Verthuy Scholarship Fund.
1985	February 21-23 National Conference: Women and the Invisible Economy. Over 225 women participate.

MILESTONES: SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR INSTITUTE

October 3-5 National Conference on MOTHERWORK/

June Prof. Elizabeth Sacca resigns as Principal.

July-December Prof. Gail Valaskakis is appointed Trustee of the Institute and Ms. Elizabeth Gardham is appointed administrator of the Institute.

1986 January 1 Prof. Arpi Hamalian is appointed Principal of the Institute.

March A month of celebrations for the 8th anniversary of the Institute.

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SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR: 78th Birthday

The following message was sent to Simone de Beauvoir on behalf of all the members of the Institute:

Le 9 janvier 1986

Chère Madame de Beauvoir,

A l'occasion de votre 78ième anniversaire, nous vous souhaitons une bonne et joyeuse année, pleine de santé et prospérité.

Veuillez accepter, chère Madame, les meilleurs voeux de tous les membres de l'Institut Simone de Beauvoir à Concordia.

Arpi Hamalian
Directrice
Institut Simone de Beauvoir
Université Concordia

TO DR. ELIZABETH SACCA

By Judith Woodsworth

The appointment of Elizabeth Sacca as Principal in 1983 added an exciting new dimension to the Simone de Beauvoir Institute. The choice of Elizabeth, Associate Professor Art Education, meant that the Institute ceased to be merely a small college in the Faculty of Arts and Science. In accordance with a desire previously expressed by Fellows, the Institute was beginning to have university-wide implications. Elizabeth's presence attracted a number of Fellows from the Faculty of Fine Arts, who along with newcomers from the Faculty of Commerce and the Faculty of Arts and Science brought fresh perspectives and new vitality to the Institute.

Elizabeth came to us with a solid background as an administrator. She had served as department Chair at the Philadelphia College of Art and as Director of graduate programmes in Art Education and Art Therapy at Concordia.

Elizabeth holds a PhD in Art Education from Pennsylvania State University. She distinguished herself as a scholar and researcher. She was a member of an inter-university task force on documentation and library resources for women's research. In collaboration with Concordia librarian, Loren Singer, she published a reference and research guide for the visual arts. She also published a significant cross-cultural study of stereotypes in art, which involved work with women in the U.S. and Brazil.

During her two years as Principal, Elizabeth maintained her commitment to research, thereby setting an example for women students and faculty members. In addition to her own work, she supported and facilitated the research of others. One notable outcome was the

conference on "Women and the Invisible Economy" held at Concordia in February 1985. Together with Associate Principal, Sheila McDonough, she worked on a joint proposal for a Chair in Women's Studies with UQAM. It is to her credit that the two initial proposals from Concordia and UQAM were integrated and that the university administration agreed to commit matching funds toward the Chair. Although the Chair as such has been awarded to Laval University, our administration still supports the joint project and there is still some hope that government funding can be obtained.

Elizabeth is currently as active as ever. She is involved with the highly visible and successful Fine Arts Committee on the Status of Women. She has received SSHRC funding for her research on sex stereotypes in art and is directing student research in the same field. She teaches interdisciplinary research seminars for masters and doctoral students in Art Education, as well as a course on art education for students in the Early Childhood Education programme.

The past two years have been stormy ones for the University as a whole, and for the Institute in particular. Despite Elizabeth's departure before the end of her term as Principal, she is to be commended for her unfailing integrity as an administrator, colleague and sister. The work she has done to further women's studies at Concordia and feminism in general has been invaluable and, while not always recognized, will endure.●

* *

FEMINIST ETHICS--THE STATE OF THE QUESTION

By Martha-Saunders-Oppenheim

The starting point of feminist ethics is the assumption that feminism is fundamentally a moral stance. It begins with women's claim to the goods and responsibilities of human moral and social life, and it passes judgment on society's and individuals' failures to respond to these claims. These claims and judgments were explicit in the first wave of feminism in the 18th and 19th centuries, and took various forms, including demands for "equal rights" within the framework of 19th century liberalism, and claims of women's moral superiority.

In contemporary feminism, reflection on ethics has until recently been confined to specific issues such as equal rights before the law and in the workplace; or more fundamental issues of the exercise of patriarchal power over women's lives and bodies, such as rape, pornography, and reproductive freedom. Much of the writing in these areas has been done not by academic ethicists, but by political activists.

Feminist ethics has only begun to emerge as a specific area within feminist theory, addressed by those trained in religious or philosophical ethics. Though much of feminist theory has direct bearing on both metaethical and practical ethical issues, these relationships have not been systematically developed. A feminist critique of ethical theory and of Christian ethics is emerging, based upon feminist theory critique in other areas, but in many ways the relationships have not yet been made explicit.

Looking back over the past 15 years of contemporary feminism we discern three stages in the development of feminist ethics. Initially, feminist ethics evolved out of political praxis. The contemporary feminist

movement began with women's awareness of and articulation of our oppression through "consciousness raising". As women began to recognize our situation and its inequalities, the early "liberal" moral claims for equal rights began to emerge. Thus there were ethical assumptions underlying the political movement -- e.g. justice and equal rights for women were assumed to be an ethical -- as well as a political -- requirement. In this stage, the politics were explicit, the ethics implicit.

In the second stage, reflection on feminist ethics emerged from political and social analysis. The ethical implications of feminist political and social theory began to be drawn, primarily in relation to issues rather than to ethical theory or metaethics. Ethical issues that have been focal in feminist writings and political activity are rape and pornography, reproductive freedom and reproductive technology, and war and arms proliferation. In the discussion of all these issues, the male use of power has been a central focus. Rape and pornography, for example, are both seen as merely the logical conclusion of the view that women exist as instruments for the satisfaction of male sexual desire, an assumption that is institutionalized in the social forms of "compulsory heterosexuality" and family life. Reproductive freedom is the issue not only in abortion access, but also in the enforced sterilization of poor and ethnic minority women, as well as the inavailability of safe and reliable contraception. Feminist analysis sees the problem as rooted in the male desire to control women's lives by controlling and claiming their procreative powers.

The initial attempts to go deeper than concrete issues and to consider what a "feminist ethics" might look like were mostly generalized critiques of the failure of western ethics to take account of women's personhood and the circumstances of women's lives.

Early examples are fund in Sheila Collins, A Different Heaven and Earth, (1974); and Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father, in her chapter titled "Beyond Phallocentric Morality" (1973).

In the third stage, which has only just begun, more systematic feminist ethical theory develops as critique of the western and Christian traditions of ethics. The remainder of this paper will focus on some highlights of this recent work.

In her article "A Framework for Feminist Ethics,"[1] Carol Robb regards the analysis of the roots of women's oppression as fundamental to a feminist ethics. Of course, it is precisely on this point -- the particular nature of the analysis -- that feminist theorists differ. While unified in their assumption of the universality of women's oppression, feminist theorists may analyze the roots of oppression differently, attributing it to economic factors (capitalism, e.g.), socialization processes, biology -- women's role in the reproductive process, the institution of compulsory heterosexuality, the romanticisation of marriage and the family. Further, each of these forms of analysis presupposes a certain view of human nature.[2] Thus we may expect that feminist ethics will develop along different lines according to the feminist theory analysis that forms its basis.

The work of Carol Gilligan (In a Different Voice)[3] has been much analyzed and much criticized, and I will not repeat this analysis and criticism at length here. Without doubt, Gilligan's work suffers from serious methodological short-comings, as well as some problematic assumptions about male-female differences that seem to be -- for Gilligan -- deeper than socialization in spite of her disclaimers to the contrary. Nonetheless, her work is suggestive of directions for future research into moral development and moral decision-making processes that will further call into

question assumptions about "normal" development that are clearly biased to represent the masculine as normative and the feminine as deviant. Also, regardless of the difficulty with Gilligan's "scientific" claims and data, her suggestions as to the importance of regarding responsibility in relationship as a fundamental moral principle are an important corrective to a view of ethics that relies almost exclusively on "objective" and rational decision-making procedures as an ethical ideal.[4]

In the field of religious ethics, the most impressive contribution thus far is the work of Beverly Wildung Harrision. The first, and so far only, full-length book on feminist ethics is Harrison's Our Right to Choose: Toward a New Ethic of Abortion (1983). In this landmark work in feminist ethics, Harrison zeroes in on one issue, abortion, in order to develop and enunciate a feminist critique of the Christian moral tradition that has never taken seriously women's personhood, well-being, and moral agency. This failure of Christian ethics gives the lie to its claim to be "pro-life" in opposing abortion. Harrison's work is very significant in advancing the feminist "pro-choice" position far beyond the simple cry for "woman's rights over her own body," and developing a tightly reasoned moral argument that is feminist in the best sense of the word, namely taking woman's well-being as a fundamental moral requirement.[5]

Feminist philosophers are approaching ethics with new insight into some of the traditional concerns of philosophical ethics. These include the central issues of autonomy and moral agency, self and personhood, human individuality and relationality.[6] There is an effort to develop a philosophical concept of self and personhood that includes the centrality of relationship, the essentiality (rather than the accidental nature) of particularity and historicity of the moral subject. Feminist philosophers reject the reduction of

moral agency to rationality, and the reduction of the human subject to mind. In this area as in all areas of feminist theory, there is an appeal to interdisciplinarity. A philosophical concept of self as relational must draw from social scientific insights into the social and psychological development of self in relationship. Thus in philosophical ethics as in other areas of feminist theory there is a methodological as well as a content critique. Interesting work is being done in this area by Canadian women philosophers, as exemplified by the program of the most recent annual meeting of CSWIP (October, 1985), as well as the three short articles in Canadian Women's Studies (Spring, 1985).

As indicated earlier, feminist ethics as a discipline is in its infancy, but growing fast. There is a great need for further development both in theoretical areas of philosophical and religious ethics, and in applied ethics. A feminist critique of the concept and application of justice in the western philosophical tradition needs to be developed. The feminist critique of ideology and the power interests of knowledge needs to be applied to the process of the development of ethical theory, in order to make visible the uses of ethics for legitimating structures of domination in western society, including the Christian tradition. Feminist ethics must expose the ideological and conflictual nature of the western ethical tradition.[7] Feminist religious and social ethicists need to develop approaches to poverty, economic and racial justice, and medical and bioethics as feminist issues. Finally, feminist ethicists, like all feminist theorists, must continually critique their own project, making sure that academic theorizing is continuously corrected by the insights that come from those engaged in the front lines of social and political action.●

FOOTNOTES

1. Barbara H. Andolsen, Christine E. Gudorf, Mary D. Pellauer, eds., Women's Consciousness, Women's Conscience: A Reader in Feminist Ethics (Minneapolis:-Winston Press, 1985), pp. 211-233.

2. See Alison Jagger, Feminist Theory and Human Nature.

3. An entire issue of Social Research (Vol. 50, 1983) was devoted to critique of Gilligan's work, from both feminist and non-feminist perspectives.

4. Others who have come to a similar view of ethics from different starting points are Eleanor Humes Haney, "What is Feminist Ethics: A proposal for continuing discussion: (Journal of Religious Ethics 8: Spring 1980), and Nel Noddings, Caring: a Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

5. See also the collection of Harrison's essays edited by Carol Robb, Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985).

6. For an overview, see Ruth Smith, "Feminism and the Moral Subject," in Andolsen et al., pp. 235-250.

7. See Sharon D. Welch, Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1985).

FRANÇOISE COLLIN à L'INSTITUT SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

par: Jeanne Maranda

Françoise Collin est une habituée de l'Institut. Elle a été si impressionnée par le contact qu'elle a établi l'an dernier avec une vingtaine d'élèves et de professeures de l'Institut, qu'elle s'est tout simplement invitée cette année.

Elle nous a réservé un moment dans son horaire très chargé de conférencière invitée au colloque sur les filles tenue à Montréal, en octobre 1985.

Françoise Collin retrouvait en cette fin d'après-midi du 25 octobre, des amies, des femmes qui avaient hâte de l'entendre. Peu nombreuses, mais attentives, captivées par ses paroles. Elle nous a livré quelques notes de sa communication au colloque: "Le féminisme et la nouvelle génération".

Ses préoccupations: comment se fera la transmission - de quelle qualité sera la transmission du féminisme d'une génération à l'autre. Elle reconnaît qu'elle sera bilatérale; que nous aurons à apprendre des jeunes tout comme nous aurons à donner. Elle ne perd pas de vue le fait qu'il y aura de la "perte" dans ce qui a été échafaudé par la première génération. Les plus jeunes feront un choix dans ce qui leur est offert car tout n'est pas à leur goût. Le "paquet" que nous avons façonné ne répond déjà plus à leurs attentes. Bien sûr, les mêmes questions reviendront mais sous d'autres conditions. Elles trouveront d'autres moyens de les aborder. Déjà les jeunes rejettent en bloc les "ismes", les doctrines globales, elles ne veulent plus fonctionner comme sur un champ de bataille. C'est donc à nous de trouver une façon originale de transmettre ce que vous avons appris. Il n'est pas question de laisser un objet, ni une idée, ni une image, il

s'agirait plutôt d'une attitude qui leur donne envie de continuer dans le même chemin des aînées. Nous pouvons être sûres d'une chose: la jeune génération a compris l'appel à "l'être " que nous avons libéré du "faire".

Voilà en vrac quelques-unes des idées reprises avec les étudiantes pendant une bonne heure pour le plus grand plaisir de chacune. Madame Collin nous quittait en nous laissant une invitation fort alléchante: elle rêve d'établir une collaboration avec la France et la Belgique et le Québec par le biais des Cahiers du Grif dont elle est la directrice. L'Institut Simone de Beauvoir a tout à gagner d'une telle association.

A vos plumes, mesdemoiselles!●

SUMMER COURSES

WMNS C291/1 Section AA SGW Campus
May 12 - June 10, 1986
M-T-Th 6:05 -8:10 p.m.
WOMEN'S IDENTITY AND IMAGES: RECENT APPROACHES.

Instructor: Elsa Shieder

WMNS L398/1 Section 40 Loyola Campus
May 13 - June 10, 1986
T. Th. 7:00 - 10:10 p.m.
THE CONCEPT OF WOMEN IN WESTERN THOUGHT.

Instructor: Sr. Prudence Allen

ADJUNCT FELLOW AFFILIATION WITH THE SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR INSTITUTE

A procedure has been established at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute for the status of Adjunct Fellow. The membership of Adjunct Fellow may be granted to someone currently involved in research on women's issues. Such a person may or may not be a member of the Concordia University community. The research project must be relevant to Women's Studies as assessed by the Institute. The project must yield some benefit to the Institute: a seminar, lcture presentation, bibliographic materials, sources for the Reading Room, research training for students, etc. The Institute will provide, in return, an identification with and membership in the Institute. Where possible the Institute will provide supportive facilities. The term of appointment may be up to one year.

Five women - Bina Freiwald, Maria Peluso, Susanne Peters, Alison Prentice and Catherine Watson have been Adjunct Fellows of the Institute during 1984, 1985 and 1986 as follows:

Bina Freiwald	June, 1984 - August, 1985
Maria Peluso	August, 1985 - May, 1986
Suzanne Peters	August, 1985 - may, 1986
Catherine Watson	September, 1985 - May, 1986
Alison Prentice	February, 1986 - December, 1986

Two new Adjunct Fellows will join us soon:

Monique Genuist	September, 1986 - December, 1986
Peta Tancred-Sheriff	January, 1987 - July, 1987

In the following paragraphs we shall provide a brief description of two of the current Adjunct Fellows' research interests and the research projects they carry during their association with the Institute.

Dr. Alison Prentice (Ph.D. History, University of Toronto.) Presently Full Professor and Head, OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education - Center for Women's Studies in Education) has been appointed an Adjunct Fellow of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute for the period starting February 14, 1986 through December 31st, 1986. Dr. Prentice is embarking on a period of research in Quebec City and Montreal in connectin with an SSHRC funded project on the history of teachers in 19th and early 20th century Quebec and Ontario. She describes her project as involving "an analysis of the changing character of the teaching profession during the period between 1820 and 1920, the period when the occupation became predominantly female and when state school systems were put in place. The conjuncture of these two trends, the feminization of teaching and the increasing controls exerted by government over schooling, is increasingly recognized as a problem of considerable importance in both the history of women and the history of education. A comparative study of Quebec and Ontario, two provinces in which sharp differences may be found both in the rates and character of feminization and in the ways in which state school systems evolved, should be of great interest. Certainly the preliminary studies that I published with Marta Danylewycz suggest that continued work in this comparative research will be very fruitful."

Dr. Prentice's work in Montreal will be chiefly in archives in various parts of the city. Dr. Prentice has submitted a brief description of her work for publication in this Newsletter (see p. 19).

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Dr. Catherine Margaret Watson (Ph.D. Sociology, McGill University) has been appointed an Adjunct Fellow of the Institute for the period starting September 1st 1985 through may 31st 1986.

She is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Guelph. She is in Montreal doing research on an SSHRC grant (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) on "Women and Depression."

The study conducted by Dr. Watson is based on qualitative interviews with approximately 40 women in the Montreal area who are either currently in treatment for a variety of "symptoms" such as a sense of self-inadequacy, hopelessness, or futility that, in clinical terms, might very well lead to a diagnosis of "depression". Specifically, she states: "I will be examining aspects of 'Women's Work' that would seem not only to induce stress but also to erode a sense of mastery and control. In the research I will be directly concerned with issues such as work overload, the problems of reconciling contradictory demands and pressures, women's perceptions of their emotional and practical pressure. Through the interviews I hope to construct an analysis -- and perhaps a "natural history' -- of the onset of depressive symptoms that renders the development of such symptoms rationally understandable as a response to the conditions of women's lives."●

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COLLOQUE: FEMMES ET MATHÉMATIQUE

Le 6 Juin, 1986

364 - 3320(Info)

BOOK REPORT

A SHREWD LOOK AT SEXUAL POLITICS IN JAPAN

A HALF STEP BEHIND: Japanese Women in the '80s by Jane Condon. Dodd Mead. $16.95 336pp.

By Patricia Morley

Jane Condon is an optimist. Whereas her book shows that Japanese women's political and social gains are small and are proceeding at a much slower pace than in the West, the difficulties are minimized in the title and glossed over at the end.

Condon concludes: "The momentum is building. Millions of underemployed and overeducated women are sitting at home, bowing beside the escalators, serving tea or greeting customers -- just waiting for their talent to be tapped, ready to contribute to the next economic miracle." The last economic miracle has been built in large part on the backs of women. Whether they will have a fairer share of the next one remains to be seen.

"Underemployed" is hardly an accurate description of the women who are working sixteen hours a day, at home and outside. The term refers to the fact that while Japanese women have had access to higher education since 1947, through a new constitution supervised by Americans, they have not been allowed (with rare exceptions) to use their education in paid (or properly paid) positions. An entire social fabric, stronger than law, stands against their emerging from the traditional roles of full-time wife and mother in the home. They may work for a few years before marriage, and thereafter, only as poorly paid part-timers, with none of the normal benefits. "Part-time" may mean a forty-hour week.

Condon, a journalist with degrees from Wellesley and Harvard, has lived in Tokyo with her husband since 1981. She has used her journalistic skills to good effect, weaving together interviews with Japanese women and her own shrewd observations.

In the Preface, Condon notes that the Japanese have two words for "truth," one referring to the superficial niceties that oil the wheels of the social machinery, the other to a truth that is deep and often painful. She has sought the latter. She speaks Japanese, and finds the language to be deliberately ambiguous. Her status as an outsider actually helped: "No Japanese would have had the gall to ask the questions I asked. And if they had, their interviewees would have tactfully sidestepped the sticky issues."

The book bears out these bold intentions. Condon gives us a thoroughly contemporary group portrait of post-war Japanese women, one shaped with sympathy and considerable insight. The parallels with our own past and present are evident, but Condon does not point to them explicitly.●

DID YOU KNOW

1288. The first recorded leap year: Margaret of Norway, Queen of Scotland, enacts a law that gives women permission to propose marriage to eligible men. Men may be penalized if they refuse the offer or treat their female suitors scornfully.

HELENE PELLETIER-BAILLARGEON, MARIE GERIN-LAJOIE

De Mère en fille, la cause des femmes.
Boréal Express, 1985, 382 pages.

par : Lucie Lequin

Ce passionnant ouvrage sur Marie Gérin-Lajoie (1890-1971) se concentre sur la vie, la spiritualité et la pensée sociale de cette femme d'action. Cependant, afin de mieux redonner vie à ce personnage fascinant, Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon raconte aussi la vie des familles Gérin-Lajoie et Lacoste, des femmes de l'entourage de la jeune Marie, en particulier sa mère, Marie Gérin-Lajoie, sa tante Antoinette Gérin-Lajoie et Mère Sainte-Anne-Marie qui ont exercé une influence déterminante sur la formation et l'orientation de la future fondatrice de l'Institut Notre-Dame du Bon-Conseil. C'est aussi l'histoire d'un milieu, bourgeoisie éclairée, et du rôle souvent autoritaire qu'y a joué l'Eglise de l'époque.

Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon, qui est journaliste de formation, ne prétend pas écrire une biographie complète car, comme elle le souligne, l'inventaire exhaustif des documents pertinents est encore à faire. Plutôt que d'adopter le déroulement chronologique, l'auteure a choisi d'approcher Marie Gérin-Lajoie par cercles concentriques d'influence: les grandes familles, les années d'apprentissage en particulier au collège de la Congrégation de Notre-Dame, l'influence de ses directeurs spirituels et conseillers, Stanislas Loiseau et Samuel Bellavance, tous deux Jésuites et enfin la fondation proprement dite de l'Institut Notre-Dame du Bon-Conseil. Si cette méthode entraîne quelques répétitions, elle permet par contre à l'auteure de tracer un portrait intense et nuancé de Marie Gérin-Lajoie.

Première bachelière canadienne-française, rédactrice en chef à la Bonne parole, fondatrice des premiers cercles d'études pour jeunes filles, cours d'action sociale dès 1919, fondation de l'Institut du Bon-Conseil en 1923, puis fondation de sa propre Ecole d'action sociale en 1931, Marie "a su être une grande novatrice, tout en agissant dans la continuité des traditions qui l'ont formée ... Elle a été une militante exemplaire dans la cause de l'éducation des femmes et une véritable pionnière dans le domaine du service social".

Goût de la nouveauté, esprit d'entreprise, discernement, lucidité, pensée d'avant-garde, impatience, voilà autant de traits qui ont dessiné la ligne de vie de cette féministe chrétienne. D'un point de vue contemporain, fonder une communauté religieuse s'explique mal et semble loin de l'innovation, mais au début du siècle une action laïque sociale n'aurait pu inspirer la confiance et Marie n'aurait pu réaliser son projet d'auxiliaire de l'action laïque: "là où les laïques ne possèdent ni la crédibilité, ni la stabilité, ni les ressources nécessaires pour maintenir des oeuvres sociales, des religieuses peuvent réunir avec succès ces trois conditions".

Dans l'avant-propos, Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon dit vouloir susciter pour Marie Gérin-Lajoie l'empathie et la connivence. C'est réussi! Elle provoque aussi le goût d'en connaître davantage sur ces autres femmes d'action dont elle nous parle ou qu'on découvre en remontant le fil de l'histoire des femmes du Québec.●

MY POINT OF VIEW

By Linda Dyer

"Can one be a feminist and enjoy
doing classical ballet too?"

I first pondered this question about five years ago. My advisor and mentor, Susan, had started taking classes. "Join up," she said. She was my advisor, and as a third-year graduate student, I was practising at taking advice. So I considered classical ballet.

I thought of pink and white gauze tutus, and fragile-looking women being picked up and carried around by men. Sure, it was all very pretty. But hadn't I, long ago, during my emerging feminist awareness, put looking pretty and being picked up by men behind me? Besides, I'd look rather silly in a tutu after my jeans and flannel shirts. And I was hardly **fragile!**

Then a fellow-student told me that Susan had asked me to join because, as a neophyte, she didn't want to be the only clumsy person in the class. Clumsy? Me? My vanity piqued, I signed up the next day.

In the months that followed, I learned about demi-plies and arabesques and grands battements. I also learned that the words "fragile" and "ballet dancer" should never be uttered in the same paragraph, far less the same breath. The muscles in my legs and arms would stand up and howl as we did our barre exercises. "If it doesn't hurt, it isn't Art," Leonard the teacher would say with his gnome-like grin. "Grace and fragility are just the illusions we create."

Leonard may have looked like a gnome, but his legs were a veritable inspiration. I could feel my body getting stronger daily. With my feminist ideals of

woman-strength, I was grinning from ear to ear even as I massaged by aching calves.

I'd become a devotee, but there were mini-traumas yet to come. I had to get used to being called a "girl." Once I discovered that the men were called "boys," that was okay, though. I learned that the tiny spins and pixie hops that were "girls' steps" required as much (if not more) precision and strength as did the grandiose leaping and prancing of the "boys' steps."

After reading a feminist critique of sado-masochism, I was troubled for weeks. I had got to the point where I rejoiced in the pain in the muscles of my waist when my leg was in "grand arabesque." After all, it meant that my "arabesque line" was coming along. Did this mean too that I was a masochist?

"No, dear," Dina, my next teacher, said soothingly. "You only <u>think</u> it's pain. Actually, it's just pressure."

Satisfied, I urged my leg a half an inch higher.

For a while, I became acutely aware of my age. I'd started classes when I was twenty-four. I could never ever progress as far or as quickly as if I'd begun fifteen or ten or even five years earlier. As a feminist, I abhorred the societal pressures on women to remain children forever: skin "as soft and smooth as a baby's," high-pitched voice, hairless body. I knew that aspirations of eternal youth were absurd. Yet I found myself envying the sixteen-year-old body at the barre beside me.

Yet Therese in her sixties and Charles in his forties take classes with as much enjoyment as young Genevieve did. I'd never be Karen Kain. So what? Most probably, she'd never be a business-school professor. I'd already chosen a career. Just because

I can't become Tina Turner doesn't mean that I won't enjoy singing in the shower.

So dreams of youthful prowess took a back-seat to the actual joys of the movement and the poses and the piano music in the background. And the challenge. Last week, I managed my first double pique turn. Richard (my current teacher) yelled: "Good girl!" and I was in seventh heaven for days. Can this be a feminist speaking? You bet.

My current battle is with the idea of pointe shoes. They remind me of Chinese foot-binding, stiletto heels and similar age-old methods of crippling women and reducing their mobility. And they hurt like hell. It seems, though, that they do a great job of strengthening the arch of the ankle and foot, and that strong arch makes such a beautiful line with the leg. Laurent tells me that he (a "boy!") took pointe classes for six months to strengthen his feet. So I've bought a pair and I've been trying them out. I think, still somewhat shame-facedly, that I'm on the verge of liking them.

I've grown to love the discipline and precision of the exercises, the power and the determination needed to hold the classical poses ("Eat more red meat and spinach!" cries Richard). I love the cascade of notes from the piano as I stand in preparation, and the excitement of a well-executed "enchainement." I love the camaraderie that develops among people who do hard physical work together. Above all, I love the keen awareness of my body and its potential.

And who knows? Someday I may even come to love those absurd tutus.●

L. Dyer would be delighted to introduce other feminists to the joys of classical ballet. Just give her a call at 848-2919.



LES FEMMES DU QUÉBEC DANS LES ANNÉES 80: UN PORTRAIT

Photos rassemblées par Annebet Zwartsenberg

24 photographes, plus de 130 photos de femmes des différentes communautés culturelles du Québec à travers les activités de la vie quotidienne.

Pour célébrer la sortie du livre, une exposition aura lieu à la galerie Powerhouse du 15 mars au 5 avril 1986.

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